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CLAIMS

1. A process for producing R-2-(4-hydroxyphenoxy)propanoic acid or a salt thereof by reaction of hydroquinone or a salt thereof with a S-2-halopropanoic acid or a salt thereof in the presence of a mild reducing agent.
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2. A process according to claim 1 wherein the S-2-halopropanoic acid is S-2-chloropropanoic acid.
- 10 3. A process according to claim 1 or claim 2 wherein the excess hydroquinone is recovered for recycle.
4. A process according to any preceding claim wherein the mild reducing agent is a neutral or a charged low oxidation state sulphur species, a low oxidation state phosphorous species, hydrazine, a hydrazine derivative or ascorbic acid.
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5. A process according to claim 4 wherein the mild reducing agent is sulphur dioxide, a sulphite, a bisulphite, a hydrosulphite, a metabisulphite, a sulphenic acid, a sulphinic acid, a phosphite, hypophosphite, hydrazine, a hydrazine derivative or ascorbic acid.
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6. A process according to claim 5 wherein the mild reducing agent is an alkali metal sulphite or bisulphite.
7. A process for the manufacture of quizalofop-P-ethyl, haloxyfop-P-methyl, fluazifop-P-butyl, clodinafop, cyhalofop-butyl or fenoxaprop-P-ethyl by a) producing R-2-(4-hydroxyphenoxy)propanoic acid by reaction of hydroquinone or a salt thereof with S-2-halopropanoic acid or a salt thereof, in the presence of a mild reducing agent, b) reacting the R-2-(4-hydroxyphenoxy)propanoic acid with the appropriate halo-aryl or halo-heteroaryl moiety to give a R-2-((4-aryloxy or heteroaryloxy)phenoxy)propanoic acid and c) esterification of the acid from step b) to give quizalofop-P-ethyl, haloxyfop-P-methyl, fluazifop-P-butyl, clodinafop, cyhalofop-butyl or fenoxaprop-P-ethyl.
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